

Educational Assistance Ltd. Uses Barter System to Generate College Scholarships for Needy Youth

LeTouneau College trustee V. R. (Swede) Roskam, Vice President for Oil-Dri Corporation of America, Glen Ellyn, Ill., has just completed the first year of a two-year special assignment.

But he's not working on a graduate degree, writing a book, opening a branch location, or researching new markets and products. Instead, Roskam, 58, is serving as president of Educational Assistance, Ltd. (EAL), a nonprofit organization formed in 1982 by Roskam and a handful of other business executives interested in helping needy young people get a college education.

"There is a growing disparity between the haves and have nots in this country," said Roskam, "and as a Christian, I feel a responsibility to do what I can to correct that. EAL is an attempt to reach out and help disadvantaged young people."

EAL operates on a sophisticated bartering system whereby corporations donate excess equipment and inventory to EAL, which in turn ships the items to a college or university which is willing to exchange the donation for an equivalent amount of scholarship assistance.

Currently 150 colleges are participating in the EAL program and to date approximately 500 students have received scholarship assistance. Four full-time and five part-time employees make up the staff of EAL, which is governed by a seven-member board of directors, all of whom are businessmen who volunteer their time. A 12-member National Advisory Committee made up of senior corporate leaders provides additional input.

Some of the approximately 75 companies which have provided assistance to EAL include Quaker Oats, American Cyanamid, DeSoto, Merrell Dow Pharmaceutical, AT&T, Allied Van Lines, Leo Burnett USA, U.S. News & World Report, Newsweek, Time-Life Publications, Arthur Young, ABS Graphics, Monsanto, Shell Oil, Chevron Chemical, Oil-Dri, and WW Grainger.

Allied Van Lines, for example, has already provided nearly half a million dollars worth of free transportation service during the last five years.

And in addition to excess inventory, Oil-Dri is providing office space, telephone service, office equipment, a computer system, secretarial support, and an \$18,000 annual grant.

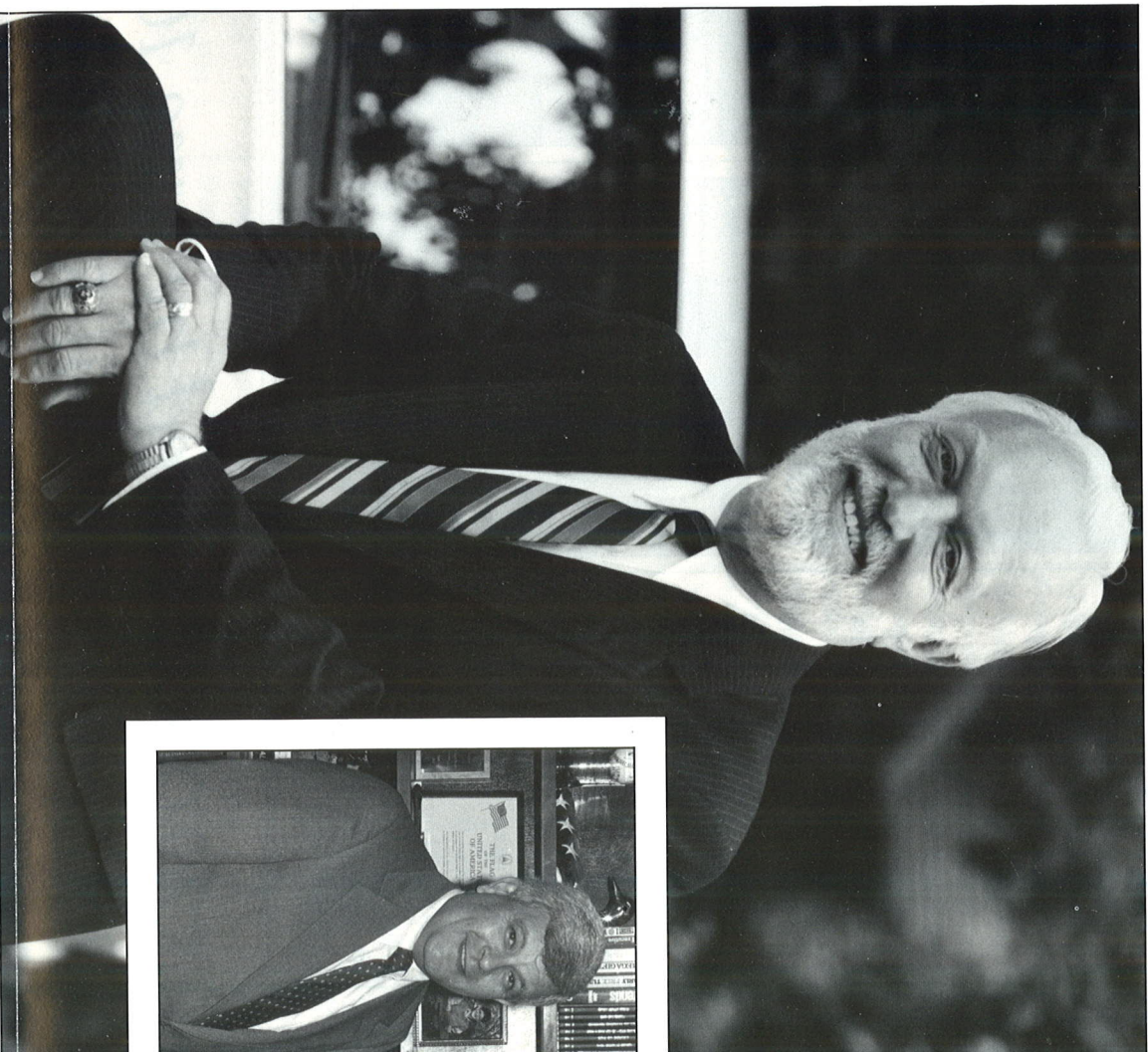
"We are proud to support EAL," said Richard M. Jaffee, Oil-Dri president. "Their program represents a tremendous benefit to society, and the potential is limited only by the level of corporate involvement."

During 1987 that involvement topped the one million dollar mark. Roskam, a 20-year veteran of Oil-Dri, hopes that number will grow to 10 or 20 million dollars annually.

"The more inventory we receive, the more young people we can help," he said.

According to Roskam, there is a ripple effect created by corporate donations.

"Everybody wins," he said. "Companies benefit by tax deductions, colleges benefit by receiving needed materials and students, needy students benefit from scholarship assistance, and the nation benefits by replacing potentially illiterate, unemployed and poverty-stricken welfare recipients with educated, employable taxpayers."



V. R. "Swede" Roskam



President Alvin O. Austin visits with V. R. "Swede" Roskam, right, president of Educational Assistance Ltd. Austin is a member of the EAL National Advisory Committee and Roskam is a member of the LeTouneau College Board of Trustees.

At LeTouneau, for example, the College has received office furniture from Quaker Oats, a printing press from American Cyanamid, and laboratory equipment from Monsanto, and in return has provided scholarship assistance to nine students.

All scholarships are awarded in the name of the sponsoring corporation.

In addition to helping needy college students, EAL also has a strong interest in preparing junior high students for college acceptance.

"We're interested in salvaging lives as well as providing an education," Roskam said, "and we're finding that we have to start with younger kids in order to do that."

Currently EAL is operating three programs for junior high students—one in Appalachia and two in inner city Chicago.

"Basically we go to communities that have an interest in our program and ask local leaders to form a board and hire a counselor," Roskam said.

"The local board interviews needy students from the area and selects 25 or 30 to participate in the program. Participants agree to be tutored if necessary, and are encouraged to stay free from liquor, drugs and sexual involvement," he added.

"In return we guarantee them an opportunity to attend college after they graduate from high school."

Roskam said that other communities, including Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Atlanta and Los Angeles have expressed interest in the junior high program. Currently 100 students are enrolled. The Appalachia program has been in place for two years and the two Chicago programs will begin this summer.

Roskam said EAL hopes to have 30 junior high programs in operation in the next five years.

EAL's efforts have not gone unnoticed. Dr. William M. Thompson, Program Officer of the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE) at the U.S. Department of Education, is one observer. "FIPSE provides seed money for educational programs," he said, "so naturally we're very interested in ways to implement innovative access programs.

"We felt that EAL was the kind of program we could support," he said, "and so we funded it for an initial three-year period [which expires in August]. Our annual level of support over the last three years has averaged \$70,000," he added.

Thompson said FIPSE receives approximately 2,000 requests for funding every year, but only approves between 60 and 70.

"EAL is in very capable hands," he said. "Not only is Mr. Roskam persuasive, he is also very dedicated. We are very happy with the project."

Another observer is Nick Goodban, Vice President of the Chicago Tribune Charities/Foundation.

"EAL is the best-run not-for-profit organization I have ever seen," he said. Goodban toured EAL headquarters and interviewed staff members before awarding EAL a \$5,000 grant, the maximum allowed by the Foundation.

"We have a magnificent staff who are full of ideas," Roskam said. "We meet once a week and discuss problems, future plans and catch up on what everyone is doing. It seems to generate a certain esprit de corps."

But while acknowledging the progress that has been made, Roskam said there is much more that needs to be done.

"This is a long-term approach to a long-term problem," he said. "We won't get there overnight, and we can't do it alone."

But with corporate support and involvement by concerned citizens like Swede Roskam, progress is being made.

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